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POLITICAL WIT AND HUMOUR

IN OUR OWN TIMES.

B1062

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

T. WILLIAMS.

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LONDON:
FIELD & TUER, THE LEADENHALL PRESS, E.C.;
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO; HAMILTON, ADAMS & CO.

1889.

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THE LEADENHALL PRESS, LONDON, E.C.
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"Sense is the diamond, weighty, solid, sound;
When cut by Wit, it casts a brighter beam."

YOUNG.

✣ Preface ✣

THE field of Politics would, indeed, be a dreary waste, if it were not for the fair flowers of Fancy and of Wit that bloom there. To select and arrange a few such flowers, of the latter kind,—some of recent, some of earlier growth, but all of them fresh and fragrant even now, for they CANNOT die,—has been the Editor's pleasurable task.

T. W.

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CHAPTER I.

Lord Palmerston.

NO statesman in our own times has occupied so unique a position as the late Lord Palmerston, the Nation's pet politician, the incomparable "Pam." Think, first, of the length of his public services, which his biographer, Mr. Evelyn Ashley, thus sums up: "He was a member of every government from 1807 to 1865, except those of Sir Robert Peel and Lord Derby. He sat in sixteen Parliaments, and was elected to sit in the seventeenth." Then recollect that he filled nearly every important office in the Cabinet, and was Prime Minister nine years. And, lastly, recall his immense popularity. "During the latter years of his life," says Mr. Ashley, "a detractor might have been driven to say of him, what the sarcastic Archbishop Sheldon said of his ancestor Sir John Temple: 'He has the *curse* of the Gospel, for all men speak well of him.'" Even his opponents had to admit that he was a more generally acceptable minister than any statesman since Lord Chatham.

Other eminent politicians,—notably in recent times,

Disraeli and Gladstone,—have been successful leaders of their respective Parties. Palmerston was the embodiment and representative, at home and abroad, of all that was patriotic and best in the Nation at large. As some beautiful obituary lines, which we once met with, well said of him:

> "The choice of his Country, low faction despising,
> He marched as a leader all true men could claim:
> They came to their fellows, and held it sufficing
> To give, as a creed, the great Minister's name."

Palmerston, though not a dazzling orator, was a clever and witty speaker. Indeed, his waggishness was incorrigible. "He seemed always disposed," said his kinsman the late Earl of Shaftesbury, "to take a light-humoured view of all and everything that came under his notice."

Thus, even on so gloomy an occasion as the eve of the Crimean War (in 1854), presiding at a Banquet given at the Reform Club to Sir Charles Napier, previous to the latter's departure with the Fleet for the Baltic, he convulsed the audience by his humorous sallies.

Mr. Bright, in the House of Commons, severely attacked Lord Palmerston for this speech.

"Such apparent levity," says Mr. Ashley, "in a minister of the Crown must have grated on the sentiment of one who abhorred the War, and thought it

unnecessary. But surely (he adds) when the conflict was inevitable and imminent, it was the common sense view of patriotism to neglect no means, however trifling, of keeping up the heart and spirit of the Nation."

Palmerston replied to Bright's strictures with, for *him*, unusual warmth, and so far forgot himself, and the respect that was due to a great and high-minded opponent, as to speak sneeringly of his critic as "the hon. and *reverend* gentleman."

In 1851, a deputation waited upon Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary, to congratulate him on his having accomplished the liberation of certain Polish and Hungarian refugees in Turkey, and resisted the demand of Russia and Austria that the men should be surrendered, or, at least, kept in confinement by the Sultan. Among other things, Palmerston said to the deputation, that, to gain the day, "much generalship and judgment had been required, and that, during the struggle, a good deal of *judicious bottle-holding* was obliged to be brought into play." This phrase, borrowed from the vocabulary of Pugilism, caused great amusement, and accounts for the numerous cartoons which readers revelling in the back numbers of "Punch" often come across, representing Palmerston, with a twig in his mouth, as the "*judicious bottle-holder.*"

Reference has been made to the commencement of the War in the Crimea. In 1855, Mr. (now Sir Henry) Layard drew attention, in the House of Commons, to the state of the Army in the Crimea, and in criticising the conduct of Lord Palmerston's Government, recommended that "the House should send out some of its own members to sit in judgment on the guilty." In reply to this attack, Lord Palmerston, amid general laughter, suggested that it might be satisfactory to the House to take the hon. member at his word, and to add to the direction,—that he and his colleagues should proceed instantly to the Crimea,—the further instruction that they "*shall remain there during the rest of the Session.*"

In 1857, when Mr. Cobden's famous Chinese motion was carried against Lord Palmerston, there voted with the mover the following array of great men, viz: Mr. Gladstone, Sir James Graham, Lord John Russell, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Roebuck.

When Palmerston's opponents denied having *combined* against him, he retorted by calling them "the fortuitous concourse of atoms."

"What energy," he once said,—speaking of the Turks,—"can be expected of a people with no heels to their shoes?"

Lord Palmerston represented Tiverton in Parliament for the last thirty years of his life. At that

place, there was, among the electors, a butcher, of the name of Rowcliff, who, on Palmerston's periodical visits to his constituency, used to subject the distinguished member to a good deal of what the Scotch call "heckling." The encounters between these two vastly disproportioned opponents, in which scenes Lord Palmerston always engaged with characteristic good humour, afforded intense merriment to the Country at large.

Here's an extract from Lord Palmerston's reply, in 1852, to one of Rowcliff's series of questions.

"My good friend, Mr. Rowcliff, has reproached me for not coming often enough among you. I must say that he does not appear disposed to make my visits here particularly agreeable to me. (Laughter.) I cannot say that the manner in which he receives me affords much encouragement to cultivate the society of persons of his way of thinking. (Renewed laughter.) Whether Mr. Rowcliff is a Radical, a Chartist, or a Tory, I really cannot say. I believe that all parties may have some reason or other for claiming him. Mr. Rowcliff says that I only told you of the *good* that Governments and Parliaments have done, and that I have *myself* done, and that I have not told you of the *bad*. Why, God bless me! it was quite unnecessary for me to do that when *he* was here. (Loud laughter.) If there was a bad

thing to be recorded, to be invented, or to be imagined, I am quite sure Mr. Rowcliff would be the first man to tell you of it. (Laughter, which was increased when Mr. Rowcliff called out 'Question!') Well, Mr. Rowcliff is impatient under this castigation. I will hit lower or higher, just as he pleases (Renewed laughter); but he must allow me to hit somewhere. Mr. Rowcliff has asked me what Government I mean to join. Now, that is a question that must depend upon the future; but I will tell him what Government I do *not* mean to join: I can assure you and him that I never will join a Government called a Rowcliff Administration. (Great laughter and cheering.)

"Now, gentlemen, do not you imagine, because you deem it very absurd that there should be such an Administration, that my friend, Mr. Rowcliff, is at all of that way of thinking; for I believe I am not far mistaken in the opinion that he will consider everything going wrong in this world, and in this Country, until the Rowcliff Administration shall govern the land." (Loud laughter.)

Again, at the General Election of 1859, the newspapers contained the following account of the doings at Tiverton.

"Mr. Rowcliff said that, as Lord Palmerston had talked a great deal about Lord Derby's Reform Bill,

he hoped his lordship would favour the electors and non-electors with his views on Reform. He would ask his lordship whether he would vote for the ballot, and whether he was in favour of manhood suffrage, or £6 franchise, or rating franchise. He was once a member of the noble lord's committee, but, finding his opinions in advance of his lordship's, he refused to remain a member any longer. (Laughter.) The noble lord also said a great deal about the Conspiracy Bill but it was well known he was a pet of the Emperor of the French. (Continued laughter.) He believed that the noble lord was a downright Tory, and the best representative the Conservatives could possibly have. He hoped his lordship would answer his questions in a straightforward and honest manner.

"Lord Palmerston said he was delighted to find that his old friend, however advanced in years, retained that youthful vigour which he possessed when first he knew him, and with his vigour he had retained also his prejudices and opinions. (Laughter, and a cry of 'No chaff.') His friend asked for a straightforward answer, and he would give him one. He totally disagreed with him in almost all his opinions. (Laughter.) He (the noble lord) thought the day would never come when he and his friend would agree in political faith. (Much laughter.) His friend asked him what he thought on many points. In the

first place he would say he was opposed to the ballot. He was against manhood suffrage. [Rowcliff: How far will you go with the franchise?] He would give a straightforward answer to that. He would not tell him. (Laughter.) He held it was his duty, after the confidence they had reposed in him, to act according to his judgment in any measure relating to Reform (Cheers). He hoped that the political difference of Mr. Rowcliff and himself would not alter their private friendship. (Loud laughter.) He was sorry to disagree with his friend, but no man could agree with everybody. The man who did agree with everybody was not worth having anybody to agree with him." (Cheers and laughter.)

The scope of this work excludes, of course, witticisms of a *non*-political character. Otherwise, it would be easy to furnish numerous illustrations of Lord Palmerston's *social* humour,—of which the following is a specimen :—

On one occasion (in the country), when handing to a man a prize of twenty-five shillings, given for the tidiest couple, he added: "Scripture says that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband; but, in *your* case, you see, she is five crowns."

CHAPTER II.

Sir Robert Peel.

THE second Sir Robert Peel was a truly great and high-minded statesman, whose name is held in reverence by all classes of the community, and not merely by those whose lot in this world is to labour (to adopt the substance of his own beautiful words); who, in the sweat of their brow, eat their daily bread; and who remember him when they renew their strength by food, at once abundant and untaxed, and which is the better relished because no longer embittered by any feeling of injustice.

He was, moreover, a fine and impressive speaker, possessing, among his other gifts of oratory, remarkable powers of invective.

In 1833, assailed in the House of Commons, by Cobbett on the subject of the Currency Bill of 1829, Peel,—after completely disposing of Cobbett's arguments,—thus scathingly proceeded: "The hon. member has not the same object for attacking *me* which he has for attacking *others*. *I* have never lent the

hon. member my confidence; from *me* the hon. member has never received any obligation."

Witness again that onslaught, in the House of Commons, on Mr. Disraeli, after one of the fierce attacks of that hon. gentleman (who had not yet reached the dignity of Cabinet rank) on the great Minister, in 1845. Mr. Disraeli had accused Peel of displaying "unusual warmth," which was not genuine. The right hon. baronet, he said, had too great a mind and filled too eminent a position ever to lose his temper; but, in a popular assembly, it was sometimes expedient to *enact* the part of the choleric gentleman; and so on.

Peel said, in reply: "It is certainly very possible to manifest great vehemence of action, and yet not be in a great passion. On the other hand (this was a thrust at Mr. Disraeli), it is possible to be exceedingly cold, indifferent, and composed in your manner, and yet to cherish very acrimonious feelings. Notwithstanding the provocation of the hon. gentleman, I will not deal so harshly with him as *he* has dealt with *me*. He undertakes to assure the House that *my* vehemence was all pretended, and warmth all simulated. I, on the contrary, will do *him* entire justice; I do believe that *his bitterness* was *not* simulated, but that it was *entirely sincere*."

A retort of Peel's that comes more, however, under

the definition of humour, was one, in 1848, in reply to Feargus O'Connor (the Chartist Leader), who, in discussing a Bill for the security of the Crown, alluded to the possible event of Beëlzebub being Sovereign.

In that case, said Peel, Feargus "would certainly enjoy the confidence of the Crown."

Sir James Graham.

THE present generation knows little of Sir James Graham. He was, however, in his time, a most prominent and capable statesman.

Sir Robert Peel, under whom he served as Home Secretary, once said that Graham was the ablest administrator, and the best man of business, he had ever known. After the death of Peel, in 1850, Graham became Leader of the Peelite Party,—of which Mr. Gladstone was the next most distinguished member. He died in 1861, at the age of sixty-four.

Graham was a splendid debater, and,—what is more to our present purpose,—a man of wit and humour.

In 1852, he was elected for Carlisle, and expressed thanks to his supporters. "Somebody had said," he remarked, "that, if he were returned, Carlisle would

be called *a refuge for the destitute.* Well, that was a better name for it to bear than *a hospital for the incurable.*"

In 1859, he was described, in a squib, as a *weathercock.*

"Well," he retorted, "I think it very likely that, on the day of election, I shall show *which way the wind blows.*"

During this General Election, Graham had spoken severely of the tactics of the Derby-Disraeli Government in seeking to influence the voting.

On the assembling of Parliament, Mr. Disraeli thus referred to the charge.

"When I saw in the newspapers the name 'City of Carlisle,' I naturally looked at what was taking place in that quarter. But reading, I fear a little incorrectly, I confess I did mistake, at the time, the speech, which appears to have been made by a distinguished member of this House, for that of the young gentleman that he was introducing to his constituents. When I read that charge upon the Ministry which we were told was to be the basis of a Parliamentary vote of want of confidence, when I read statements, made without the slightest foundation, and with a bitterness which seemed to me to be perfectly gratuitous, I could not help saying, 'Young men will be young men.' Youth is, as we all know, somewhat reckless in assertion,

and, when we are juvenile and curly, one takes pride in sarcasm and invective. . . . I felt,—and I am sure my colleagues shared the same sentiments,—that, when that young gentleman entered this House, he might,—when gazing upon the venerable form, and listening to the accents of benignant wisdom that fell from the lips of the right hon. gentleman the member for Carlisle,—learn how reckless assertion in time may mature into accuracy of statement, and how bitterness and invective, however organic, can be controlled by the vicissitudes of a wise experience."

Graham retorted with great severity. "The right hon. gentleman," said he, "went on to remark upon the mild influences of age, presenting in his own person a contradiction of the Horatian maxim, '*Senit albescens animos capillus;*' because he was an illustration of the fact that one might lose one's curls and still retain one's taste for sarcasm. I must say, Sir, on this occasion, that I had the honour of a seat in the House when the right hon. gentleman first took his place in it. I early, indeed immediately, recognized his great abilities, and, without envy, without the slightest grudging, I have watched his rise to his present pre-eminence. But intemperate language in a position such as the right hon. gentleman occupies is always a proof to me of a falling cause, and I regard that speech, and those expressions, as a happy

omen of the coming success of this Motion. The right hon. gentleman will pardon me if I express to him an opinion. I regard him as the Red Indian of Debate. By the use of the tomahawk he has cut his way to power, and by a recurrence of the scalping system he hopes to prevent the loss of it. When the right hon. gentleman uses towards one who offered him no offence, language of the tone and character which he has applied to me, I say this, that I was astonished by the rudeness of the assault, but I really forgive it on account of the feeling of anger and disappointment at blighted hopes by which it was dictated."

CHAPTER III.

The late Lord Derby.

IT is surprising, too, how seldom the name of the late Lord Derby is now mentioned in connection with politics. He was associated, however, with many great and beneficent public measures. Beginning his political life as a Liberal, he rendered Lord Grey,—of whose Government he was a member,—very distinguished service in carrying the Reform Bill of 1832; and, about the same time, passed, as Chief Secretary for Ireland, some valuable Educational and Ecclesiastical measures affecting that much-legislated-for Country.

In 1833, being then Colonial Secretary, he had the honour of conducting through the House of Commons the Bill for the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies; and, during his third Premiership of a Conservative Government,—he seceded from the Whigs, in 1834,—he carried, as is well known,—or rather his First Lieutenant Mr. Disraeli carried for him,—the Boroughs Household Suffrage Bill of 1867. He was, moreover, a polished and powerful orator,—

"the Rupert of Debate," he had been called;—and, what is more to our present purpose, a caustic and witty speaker.

Attending a Mansion House dinner in 1850, Lord Stanley, as he then was,—made allusion to Lord Brougham (who was absent) as "his noble and learned, but somewhat volatile friend." For this, Lord Brougham took him to task, on the following evening, in the House of Lords, saying, among other things, "Volatile means flighty; but I, to answer a speech made in my presence in the House of Lords, have never flown to the House of Mayors." Lord Stanley, in his reply, expressed regret that he had occasioned disquietude to "his noble and learned and *very grave and very discreet friend*," but proceeded to justify the expression he had used on the previous evening. "In point," said he, "of acuteness, activity, rapidity, and pungency, sal-volatile is nothing when compared with my noble and learned friend. You may put a stopper of glass upon that ethereal essence, but I defy any human power, even that of my noble and learned friend himself, to put any stopper, either of glass or leather, or any other material, over the activity, ingenuity, and pungency of his mind."

Speaking, in the House of Lords, at the opening of the Session of 1863, Lord Derby expressed his

regret that he was unable to congratulate Earl Russell on his foreign policy.

"The noble earl and myself," he said, "have happened to be colleagues of one of the most able and shrewd men, Lord Melbourne, who also possessed a great deal of ordinary common sense. One lesson he constantly inculcated on his colleagues. When there was a matter of great embarrassment, which it was not known how to dispose of at the moment, his favourite observation was, 'Can't you let it alone?' I am sure the noble earl must recollect as well as I do that saying of the noble lord, 'Can't you let it alone? It will do very well if you only let it alone.' But that is the very thing which, with all his experience, and with the example of Lord Melbourne before him, the noble earl cannot do. He cannot let it alone. We know that the courage and confidence of the noble earl, in undertaking to surmount any possible difficulty, have been proverbial since the days of Sydney Smith. If there be any difficulty of any kind, anything calculated to embarrass the statesmen of this or any other Country, the noble earl is ready to say, 'Come, I will settle it at once; I will tell you how to do it;' and then, without even the preliminary apology which used to be given by a celebrated character,—'I hope I don't intrude,'—he offers his advice and assistance to any

Nation that he may suppose to stand in need of them."

And, on a similar occasion, in the following year, the Conservative Leader thus attacked the Government on the same vulnerable point, with especial reference to Danish affairs.

"Now my lords, as to non-intervention in the internal affairs of other Countries, when I look around me, I fail to see what Country there is, in the internal affairs of which the noble earl has not interfered. *Nihil intactum reliquit, nihil tetigit quod*, I cannot say *non ornavit*, but *non conturbavit*. Or the foreign policy of the noble earl, as far as the principle of non-intervention is concerned, may be summed up in two homely but expressive words, 'meddle and muddle.' During the whole course of his diplomatic correspondence, wherever he has interfered,—and he has interfered everywhere,—he has been lecturing, scolding, blustering, and retreating. In fact, I cannot think of the foreign policy pursued by the noble earl and his colleagues without being reminded of another very distinguished body of actors commemorated, as your lordships are aware, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of that celebrated troupe the two chief ornaments were Bottom, the weaver, and Snug, the joiner. It appears to me that the noble earl opposite combines the qualities which are attri-

buted to both those distinguished personages. Like Bottom, the weaver, he is ready to play every part, not even excepting that which he has already played most satisfactorily, viz., 'Moonshine.' But his favourite part is the part of the Lion. 'Oh,' says the noble earl, 'let me play the Lion. I will roar so that it will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar so that I will make the Duke say, "Let him roar again; let him roar again!"' The noble earl, too, knows as well as any one, how, like Bottom, to 'aggravate his voice,' so that he will 'roar you as gently as any sucking dove;' and, moreover, he has had recourse more than once to the ingenious and somewhat original device of letting half his face be seen through the lion's neck, as if to say, 'For all my roaring I am no lion at all, but only Snug, the joiner.' There is, however, one point of difference which I would have you observe, because it is rather important. Bottom, the weaver, and Snug, the joiner, were possessed by an earnest desire not to alarm the ladies too much, and consequently they gave due warning at the outset. On the other hand, the noble earl's disclosure that, though the roar was like that of a lion, the face was only that of the noble lord himself, was not made betimes, in order that the audience might not be frightened, but only because he found that all the roaring in the world would not frighten them."

To these merciless criticisms, Lord Russell, by the way, replied with unwonted spirit. "The noble earl," he said, "began with a good deal of wit and with a good many facts. But, while his wit was excellent in itself,—indeed, there could be none better, seeing that it was all taken from Shakespeare,—the facts of the noble earl, which were his own, had no more foundation than the story of Bottom, the weaver, himself.

"The taunt which Sheridan applied to one of his opponents might, indeed, be applied to the noble earl,—that he borrowed his wit from his memory, and his facts from his imagination."

The present Duke of Argyll used often to enliven the House of Lords by his attacks on the Earl of Derby. Although the Duke was, probably, the best debater,—next to the Conservative Leader,—then in the House, his onslaughts didn't disturb his opponent much. The Duke was welcome to his pastime,—the Earl once told him,—on the principle of the Irishman who allowed his wife to beat him: It pleased *her* and didn't hurt *him*.

It was Lord Derby, we may remind the reader, who was the author of that amusing definition of an "*independent* politician": "a politician who cannot be *depended* on."

CHAPTER IV.

Lord Beaconsfield.

WE have spoken of Lord Derby's First Lieutenant. We have not had in our own time,—probably we should have to go back a long way in the history of English politics to find,—a public speaker who possessed more wit and humour than did Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield.

We have space in our work for only a small proportion of the numerous examples at hand illustrative of those qualities of his remarkable genius.

Perhaps, even Mr. Disraeli never uttered a more amusingly terse and trenchant criticism, than the well-known one he pronounced in the House of Commons in 1845, on Sir Robert Peel, in reference to the latter statesman's adoption of Liberal principles, which culminated, not long afterwards, in his proposing the repeal of the Corn Laws.

"The right hon. gentleman," said Mr. Disraeli, "caught the Whigs bathing, and walked away with

their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position, and he is himself a strict conservative—of their *garments*."

More scathing, though not so witty, was the invective in which Mr. Disraeli indulged, in the same place, during the following year, at the expense of this enlightened and progressive minister; one who was never afraid to change his mind, but held that, in the words of another eminent man, "the best consistency is to be consistent to oneself, by acting every day up to the light of that day." Fidelity to our convictions is a brave thing. To dare to change them is often a braver. But, to return from this digression. "The Prime Minister," his censor said, "had all his life long traded on the ideas and intelligence of others. His life," he went on, "has been one great appropriation clause. He is a burglar of others' intellect. Search the Index of Beatson, from the days of the Conqueror to the termination of the last reign, there is no statesman who has committed political petty larceny on so great a scale."

In 1858, the Derby-Disraeli Government having come into power on the defeat of Lord Palmerston's Administration over the "Conspiracy-to-Murder" bill, the fate of the Government was threatened by various motions of censure on its Indian Policy. These motions were, however, one by one, withdrawn, the

Ministry, which had been in danger of being overthrown, then becoming stronger than ever.

Mr. Disraeli, in a speech at Slough, soon afterwards, thus facetiously and cleverly describes the event:—

"There is nothing like that last Friday evening, in the history of the House of Commons. We came down to the House, expecting to divide at four o'clock in the morning; I myself probably expecting to deliver an address two hours after midnight; and I believe that, even with the consciousness of a good cause, that is no mean effort. Well, gentlemen, we were all assembled; our benches with their serried ranks seemed to rival those of our proud opponents; when suddenly there arose a wail of distress, but not from us. I can only liken the scene to the mutiny of the Bengal army. Regiment after regiment, corps after corps, general after general, all acknowledged that they could not march through Coventry. It was like a convulsion of Nature, rather than an ordinary transaction of human life. I can only liken it to one of those earthquakes which take place in Calabria and Peru. There was a rumbling murmur, a groan, a shriek, a sound of distant thunder. No one knew whether it came from the top or the bottom of the House. There was a rent, a fissure in the ground, and then a village disappeared, then a tall tower

toppled down, and the whole of the Opposition benches became one great dissolving view of anarchy."

Mr. Lowe had rendered most material aid to the Conservatives in turning out, on the question of Electoral Reform, the Russell-Gladstone Government of 1866. So much so that, when the Tories came into power afterwards, he was offered, but refused, an important post in the new Cabinet. Great then was the indignation of this sturdy opponent of any lowering of the franchise to find, as he soon did, that he had helped to defeat the Liberal £7 Franchise Bill only to make way for the Conservative Household Suffrage Measure,—that he had not helped to "dish" Reform, but only to "dish the Whigs,"—to quote the late Lord Derby's famous phrase on this very question.

Mr. Lowe thenceforward became one of the bitterest assailants of Mr. Disraeli, who took care to return "railing for railing."

Thus, on one occasion,—it was during the Commons' debate on Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church Resolutions, in 1868,—after criticising Lord Cranborne,—the present Marquis of Salisbury,—in that celebrated passage describing the noble lord's invective as wanting "finish," he thus referred to Mr. Lowe:—

"When the bark is heard from this side, the right hon. member for Calne emerges, I will not say from his cave, but, perhaps, from a more cynical habitation. He joins immediately in the chorus of reciprocal malignity,—

'And hails with horrid melody the moon.'

"The right hon. gentleman is a very remarkable man. He is a learned man, though he despises history. He can chop logic like Dean Aldrich; but, what is more remarkable than his learning and his logic, is that power of spontaneous aversion which particularly characterises him. There is nothing that he likes, and almost everything that he hates. He hates the working classes of England. He hates the Roman Catholics of Ireland; he hates the Protestants of Ireland. He hates her Majesty's Ministers. And, until the right hon. gentleman, the member for South Lancashire (Mr. Gladstone) placed his hand upon the ark, he seemed almost to hate the right hon. gentleman the member for South Lancashire. But now, all is changed. Now, we have the hour and the man. But I believe the clock goes wrong, and the man is mistaken."

Every well-informed political student knows the prominent part which Mr. Gladstone took in moulding to his own views the Conservative Reform Bill of 1867. Mr. Disraeli accepted many of his great rival's

suggestions during the passage of the Measure, but occasionally chafed under Mr. Gladstone's dictatorship. In a famous speech, delivered in the House of Commons in March of that year, Mr. Disraeli thus retorted on his tormentor :—

"And then the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Gladstone) gets up, and addresses me in a tone which, I must say, is very unusual in this House. Not that I at all care for the heat he displays, although really! his manner is sometimes so very excited and so alarming, that one might almost feel thankful that gentlemen in this House, who sit on the opposite sides of this table, are divided by a good broad piece of furniture. The right hon. gentleman,—addressing me in the tone and with the air of a familiar of the Inquisition,—puts me to the question, and says, '*This* must be given up ; *this* must be abandoned,' and so forth."

In a very clever speech, delivered in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in 1872, Mr. Disraeli thus described the difference in the Gladstone Ministry between their earlier and their later years of existence :—

"But, gentlemen," he said, "as time progressed it was not difficult to perceive that extravagance was being substituted for energy by the Government. The unnatural stimulus was subsiding; their par-

oxysm ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent Chief alternated between a menace and a sigh. As I sit opposite the Treasury Bench, the Ministers remind me of one of those marine landscapes not unusual on the coast of South America: you behold a range of exhausted volcanoes; not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest; but the situation is still dangerous—there are occasional earthquakes, and, ever and anon, the dark rumbling of the sea."

In 1873, writing to Lord Grey de Wilton, Mr. Disraeli pronounced this scathing judgment on Mr. Gladstone's Administration:

"For nearly five years the present Ministers have harassed every trade, institution, and species of property in the Country. Occasionally they have varied this state of civil warfare by perpetrating some job which outraged public opinion, or by stumbling into mistakes which have been always discreditable and sometimes ruinous. All this they call a policy, and seem quite proud of it; but the Country has, I think, made up its mind to close this career of blundering and plundering."

And, in the same year, speaking at Glasgow, Mr. Disraeli thus referred to his old antagonist Mr. Lowe, who had opposed any interference in the affairs of Abyssinia.

"He described the horrors of the Country and the terrors of the climate. He said there was no possibility by which any success could be obtained, and the people of England must prepare themselves for the most horrible catastrophe. He described, not only the fatal influence of the climate, but I remember he described one pink fly alone, which he said would eat up the whole British Army. He was as vituperative of the insects of Abyssinia as if they had been British workmen."

Mr. Disraeli was singularly effective in the humorously telling phrases which he invented and applied to his opponents and their works. We have already recalled examples of his talent in this respect. Here are others. Mr. Goldwin Smith he once described as "a rampant lecturer and a wild man from the cloisters." He dubbed a certain speech by Lord Palmerston, in 1855, "the patrician bullying of the Treasury Bench."

Replying, on a memorable occasion, to the late Mr. Beresford Hope, who had alluded to him as "the Asian Mystery," Mr. Disraeli sarcastically complimented his critic on his exhibitions, adding that "their Batavian grace took away their sting." (The Hopes are of Dutch descent.) A certain blue-book he once called "the greatest work of imagination that the nineteenth century has produced"; and, in his

very last speech in the House of Commons, viz., in 1876, he raised a laugh at the expense of Sir William Harcourt, who had attacked the Eastern policy of the Government by alluding to the "Rhodian eloquence" of that learned gentleman.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Gladstone.

FROM the name of Mr. Disraeli to that of Mr. Gladstone is a natural and easy transition. They were, as antagonists, continually associated in the public eye for, at least, the greater part of their political lives; and, though Death,—a mightier fighter than either of them,—has, for the space of eight years, laid the elder of the doughty champions low, people seldom, even now, think of one without recalling the other. They were certainly very unlike; the estimate in which each was held by his opponent being, probably, very well typified by the respective criticisms which "Punch" once made them pronounce on each other's *literary* productions.

Mr. Gladstone, holding in his hand a copy of "Lothair," says: "Hm! Flippant!" while Mr. Disraeli, holding in *his* hand a copy of "Juventus Mundi," exclaims: "Ha! Prosy!"

Yet they were once within an ace of becoming colleagues and co-workers. In 1855, after the defeat of Lord Aberdeen's Administration on Mr. Roebuck's

Motion for a Committee of Inquiry into the blunders perpetrated by the Ministry in connection with the Crimean War, Lord Derby, who was called upon to form a Government, first thought of a Coalition Ministry, with himself, Lord Palmerston, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Disraeli among its members. Lord Palmerston was to lead in the Commons, and Gladstone and Disraeli were, of course, to be his Chief Lieutenants there. The scheme fell through, in consequence of Palmerston and Gladstone refusing to be parties to it. Had they assented, how the course of Disraeli and Gladstone's public careers! nay more, how the course of recent political history might have been modified!

This thought opens the door to a wide and interesting field for meditation. But we have no space at our command for speculative pursuits.

Mr. Gladstone's opponents may call him a Colossus of Words; they may charge him with being "inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity"; but their very criticisms are involuntary tributes to the might and magic of his eloquence. Indeed, he is, probably, the most marvellous Parliamentary orator, —judged by the *number* as well as the *quality* of the great speeches he has delivered,—that this century has produced. Tristram Shandy's description of his (Tristram's) father has a wonderful application to

Mr. Gladstone: "He was, certainly, irresistible, both in his orations and disputations; he was born an orator. Persuasion hung upon his lips, and the elements of Logic and Rhetoric were so blended in him, that Nature might have stood up and said: This man is eloquent." We heard him once pour forth, in the House of Commons, an uninterrupted stream of the most amazing unpremeditated oratory that it has ever been our good fortune to listen to. The occasion was quite a sudden one that arose, being an unexpected Motion by Sir Stafford Northcote, the then Leader of the Conservative Opposition, for the adjournment of the House on a question relating to the Egyptian policy of the Government. Mr. Gladstone not only defended that policy with matchless skill,—and it *required* some defending,—but proceeded to carry the wordy warfare into the enemy's camp. Opening wide the flood-gates of his copious and magnificent eloquence, he discharged upon the devoted heads of the Opposition an unceasing torrent of expostulation, invective, declamation, which overwhelmed, put to confusion, and utterly routed, his discomfited foes.

But people say Mr. Gladstone is deficient in *humour*. Now, humour is, undoubtedly, not one of the most prominent characteristics of his style. He often, however, employs it with admirable effect,—

more so *now* than in his younger years. "To see" (says a recent writer) "the genial sarcasm or innocent gibe spread a smile over his grey and deeply-seamed countenance, is like watching the sunlight from a changeful sky flow down a scarred and rugged rock."

The following examples we have culled at various times, but mainly from his comparatively *recent* speeches.

Speaking at Leeds in 1881, on the subject of Fair Trade, Mr. Gladstone thus observed :—

"Now, what is this Fair Trade system? It proposes that we shall tax foreign manufactures in order that they may untax our manufactures. That is its first proposal. Well now, gentlemen, it appears to me to be a considerable exaggeration of a great Christian precept. There is a great Christian precept that, if a man strikes you on one cheek, you should 'turn to him the other also'; but the precept with Mr. Ecroyd and others is, 'if somebody smites you on one cheek, you should smite yourself on the other also.' That appears to me to be a needless exaggeration."

And again, at Dalkeith, in 1885, he made the following remarks on the same subject.

"It is always a bad sign, gentlemen, when any body of men, or professors of any political creed, find it necessary to discover a new name under which to represent themselves. It shows that the old name

is worn out, while the old purpose remains. The cloak of Protection is now by far too ragged. It is so full of holes, that it will not rest on any man's shoulders; but Fair Trade has been polished up to do duty in its stead."

Speaking at Edinburgh, in 1884, on the County Franchise Bill of that year, Mr. Gladstone said:—

"When our opponents call out for redistribution, what they really mean is this: that, in their view, the franchise in not a good, but is in the nature of an evil, and of an inconvenience, which can only be rendered tolerable and rendered manageable by joining it with particular methods of arrangement. According, gentlemen, to a simile which I once ventured to use about it,—and I think it is a true one,—they seem to proceed as if it was a question of the arrival of a great lot of wild beasts at a place where they were to be expected, and the people who were to have the charge of them, when the caravans containing them arrived, very naturally say that they will not be safe with these wild beasts until they are all, and each of them, lodged in their separate cages."

In 1886, at Edinburgh, exposing what the speaker deemed the inconsistencies of one of his late Lieutenants, on the subject of Home Rule, Mr. Gladstone said: "So high flies Mr. Chamberlain, like the *lark*, and so low flies Mr. Chamberlain, like the *swallow*

before a shower, according to the suggestions of his teeming brain."

And again, in the House of Commons this year, he thus resumed his criticism of the member for Birmingham, and those who thought and acted with him on the same matter :—

"These are the circumstances under which all those brilliant and copious promises have been dispersed and dissipated. My right hon. friend was, himself, the most prolific parent of one scheme after another, the man who has around him the greatest multitude of shattered and ruinous promises, all of which, perhaps, some day, he will have picked off the ground and cast into his waste-paper basket. When I think of the unequal case, and of the engagements taken to Ireland in 1886, in order to get rid of the Home Rule Bill and of the Home Rule Ministry, and of the manner in which those engagements have been disregarded and trampled wantonly under foot, I recollect that there is a road which is said to be paved with good resolutions, and it recurs to my mind that if, at any time, in repairing the pavement of that place, there should be a deficiency in the supply of good resolutions, the deficiency can be filled up with broken Irish promises, of which the supply will be inexhaustible, and the material will do just as well."

Here's a humorous exposure, uttered by Mr. Glad-

stone at the Memorial Hall in 1887, of what the speaker considered the opportunism of his political opponents :—

"These two doctrines," (he was alluding to certain "no-surrender" views which the Conservatives had expressed, but afterwards modified, on a particular phase of the Irish Land Question)—"These two doctrines appeared to be pitched very high, and to become part of that apparatus of conscientious conviction with which the Tory mind is largely and abundantly imbued,—until the day of pressure comes,—when the usual process is this, that they begin to unpack them, and to distribute them to the four winds of heaven with a celerity and bounty that cannot be too much admired."

In 1888, speaking in the House of Commons, on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, he referred to the fact that the Ministry had utterly failed to prove a certain part of their case. "The Attorney General," he went on, "The Attorney General" (Sir Richard Webster) "did make an attempt" (to prove it), "and what was the narrow basis of that attempt? Why, it was one upon which a tight-rope dancer might, perhaps, have found a footing, but from which men with only ordinary means of locomotion must have fallen."

Mr. Gladstone often turns to most witty and effec-

tive account the interruptions with which his speeches are sometimes greeted. Our remaining examples from his utterances all illustrate his adroitness in this respect.

In the speech from which we last quoted, he was assailed, in one passage, by ironical cheers from the Conservative benches: "I am glad," he said, "to have my assertions supported by hon. gentlemen opposite, whose approval is conveyed in that semi-articulate manner which they find so congenial."

And at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, also last year, alluding to Gladstonian and Unionist Liberalism, he thus spoke:—

"It is said that there are *two* wings" (a voice: "One has got no feathers to it,"—meaning the Liberal Unionist Section). Mr. Gladstone: "It, probably, would be better if that one wing had some feathers on it, because there then might be a chance of its flying away.

"I am afraid that, as matters now stand, there is no likelihood of its flying away by voluntary action, although I have no doubt that, feathers or no feathers, like the albatross, which I believe is not at all strong in that particular, when the proper time comes, you will teach that wing to fly."

Before leaving Mr. Gladstone, we here reproduce a smart remark by Mrs. Gladstone.

During one of her husband's Midlothian tours, Mr. Cowan, the Chairman of his Election Committee, eulogistically alluded, at a public meeting, to the Queen as "Queen, Wife, Widow, Mother and Grandmother." This anti-climax, said one of the newspapers, in describing the event, provoked much laughter, during which Mrs. Gladstone suggested to the chairman *Great*-Grandmother, thus restoring the lost climax.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Bright.

JOHN BRIGHT, who, despite his former unpopularity with certain classes, has lately passed away mid—

> ". . . that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,"

was described by both Lord Salisbury, in the House of Lords, and Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons, as the finest orator that this generation has seen. One modern writer, indeed, goes so far as to say that: "Never, since the time of Demosthenes, probably, have there been more than half a dozen speakers who have attained the marvellous fluency and the majestic diction of Mr. Bright." True! Carlyle met him once at Rochdale, heard him speak, and thought the exhibition "paltry enough." But this sceptical Thomas had no particular belief in any of the eminent men of his time,—looked upon them superciliously as "poor creatures,"—with the single exception of the sage who lived not a hundred miles from Chelsea.

The noble passage, from the speech made by Mr. Bright in 1855, when pleading in the House of Commons with Lord Palmerston to put an end to the horrors of the Crimean War, is considered one of the finest specimens of his "moving eloquence."

"The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and side-posts of our doors, that he may spare us and pass on; he takes his victims from the castles of the noble, the mansions of the wealthy, and the cottages of the poor and the lowly; and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal."

But some people will think equally striking that splendid vindication, uttered at St. James' Hall in 1866, of his position as an agitator for Electoral Reform. He had been saying:

"If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them,—if I speak of their danger to the monopolists of power,—am I not a wise counsellor, both to the people and to their rulers?"

And then he proceeded thus:—

"Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and, seeing a hamlet or a homestead planted on its slope, I said to the dwellers in that hamlet, or in that

homestead, you see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain. That vapour may become a dense, black smoke, that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain. That trickling of lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain. That muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that, at your feet, is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, as history tells us that dynasties and aristocracies have passed away, and their name has been known no more for ever. If I say this to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and, if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes the world to shudder, am I responsible for that catastrophe? I did not build the mountain, or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men that were in danger."

By the way, how homely Mr. Bright's oratory was, even at its best!—its very simplicity, indeed, constituted one of its chief merits (it is the highest art, we know, to conceal art). Even the phrase "Angel of Death" is un-original enough. Says Byron :—

> "The Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed."

And this simplicity is especially apparent, as we shall presently see, in his *humorous* passages, which often consist of the most ordinary every-day allusions and happily applied literary references, or quotations—

"Familiar in our mouths as household words."

His almost too well-known to be here repeated description, in the House of Commons, of Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe,—the Leaders of the Liberal revolt on Reform, in 1866,—has rarely been surpassed as a piece of pleasant, playful satire.

"The right hon. gentleman," he said (referring to Mr. Horsman), "has retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, and he has called about him every one that was in distress, and every one that was discontented. At last he has succeeded in hooking the member for Calne (Mr. Lowe). When a Party is formed of two men so amiable, so discreet, as the two right hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see, for the first time in Parliament, a Party perfectly harmonious, and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This Party of two reminds me of the Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it."

In the same speech, Mr. Bright complained of Mr.

Lowe,—who had lived in Australia,—that he seemed to take a "Botany Bay view of his countrymen" (Mr. Lowe had been denouncing the working classes, whom he considered unfit to be entrusted with the franchise).

Speaking, in the House of Commons, on the Conservative Reform Measure of 1867, Mr. Bright said :—

"The Bill, as a whole, I regard as very unsatisfactory. It has marks upon it of being the product, not of the friends, but of the enemies of Reform. It is wonderful what clever men will do when a dozen of them are shut up in a room. Now, look at the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Disraeli). Why, he is a marvel of cleverness, or else he would not have been, for twenty years, at the head of hon. gentlemen opposite, to lead them into this—what shall I call it?—great difficulty at last. Take the right hon. member who sits next to him, representing a very learned University, Cambridge (Mr. Walpole). Take the President of the Poor Law Board (Mr. Gathorne Hardy, now Lord Cranbrook), who represents the wisdom, and it may be, to some extent, the prejudices of Oxford. Take the right hon. member for Droitwich (Sir John Pakington). I fear to speak of so potent a personage. Why, at this moment, he directs the whole of the Armies of the Empire.

There is not a soldier who shivers amid the snows of Canada, or who sweats under the sun of India, but shivers and sweats under the influence of the right hon. gentleman. Why, it was only the other day he was Lord High Admiral of England:

> 'His march was on the mountain wave,
> His home was on the deep.'

But all these gentlemen retire into a mysterious apartment in Downing Street, and they set to work and concoct a Reform Bill; and, with all their capacity, it seems to me to come out a Bill marvellously like that which would have been made by the hon. member for Lincolnshire (Mr. Banks Stanhope), who last night gave us an account of his conversion. Anything more affecting could hardly be heard in any class-meeting."

That was a smart reply by Mr. Bright to the complaint (already quoted) of Mr. Disraeli, in 1873, as to the "harassing" legislation of the Government of Mr. Gladstone. "If such critics," exclaimed the speaker, "had been alive at the time the Ten Commandments were issued, they would have condemned them also as 'harassing legislation.'"

Summing up, on one occasion, what he considered the nepotism of the Whigs, Mr. Bright said their motto was: "A *place* for every man, and every man in his *place*." And, at another time, denouncing

patronage and privilege among the upper classes, "it reminded him," he said, "of Hosea Biglow:

> 'It is something like a fulfilling the prophecies,
> When all the first families have all the best offices.'"

While, on another occasion (though we forget *when*, and have never met with any subsequent allusion to it), we recollect his twitting with their love of power the members of the Government, and thus cleverly parodying the well-known stanza,—Dr. Johnson's favourite one,—of Gray's Elegy:—

> "For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
> The transient sweets of *office* e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the *Treasury*,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?"

He once referred to the "prophesying Brahmins of the great Whig Houses"; and of Mr. Disraeli's proposal to endow a Catholic University, as a remedy for the grievances of Ireland, he said it reminded him of the mountebank who, at a country fair, sold pills that were good against the earthquake.

There is, as will be observed, more of humour than of wit in Mr. Bright's speeches, understanding humour to contain less of the acid or personal, and more of the genial, element than wit, which appears to be the proper distinction between the two terms.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Lowe.

MR. LOWE (the present Lord Sherbrooke) had been in Parliament thirteen years, before, in 1866, he surprised the House of Commons and the Country by the brilliancy and effectiveness of his orations, which did so much to defeat the Russell-Gladstone Reform Bill of that year. He had always been recognized as a scholarly and clever man, and an incisive and able speaker; but no one imagined that he was capable of rising to the height of the great argument which he then essayed. Of course, most persons now recognize,—and probably Lord Sherbrooke would himself admit,—that his Cassandra-like conduct at that time was without justification. Reform,—as the then Lord Derby admitted of his own Measure, which came afterwards, was a "leap in the dark"; but, as the present Lord Monkswell recently said, in reference to another political matter: Its being an *experiment* was "no reason why it should not be tried. Marriage is an experiment, but most people enter upon it, and it is not always a *failure*."

We heard Mr. Lowe speak in his palmy days. His enunciation suffered from its rapidity; but his matter, at its best, was superb. Here are two striking examples of his graver style.

On the evening following Mr. Gladstone's speech introducing the Liberal Measure, Mr. Lowe, in the House of Commons, as has been said, "attacked the then Chancellor of the Exchequer upon his own Classic ground," concluding as follows:—

"The intentions and actions of the new Parliament are as yet hidden by the veil of the future. It may be that we are destined to avoid this enormous danger with which we are confronted, and not, to use the language of my right hon. friend, to compound with danger and misfortune. But, Sir, it may be otherwise; and all I can say is, that, if my right hon. friend does succeed in carrying this Measure through Parliament,—when the passions and interests of the day are gone by, I do not envy him his retrospect. I covet not a single leaf of the laurels that may encircle his brow. I do not envy him his triumph. His be the glory of carrying it; mine of having to the utmost of my poor ability resisted it!"

And, on the second reading of the Bill Mr. Lowe thus spoke:—

"Surely the heroic work of so many centuries, the matchless achievements of so many wise heads and

strong hands deserve a nobler consummation than to be sacrificed at the shrine of revolutionary passion, or the maudlin enthusiasm of humanity! But, if we do fall, we shall fall deservedly. Uncoerced by any external force, not borne down by any internal calamity, but in the full plethora of our wealth and the surfeit of our too exuberant prosperity, with our own rash and inconsiderate hands we are about to pluck down on our heads the venerable Temple of our Liberty and our Glory. History may tell of other acts as signally disastrous, but of none more wanton, none more disgraceful!"

It is, however, as a wit that we have to do with Mr. Lowe. During the debates on the various stages of this Measure, as well as afterwards, he was frequently satiric and jocular. Thus: Mr. Bright standing upon the Constitution, he remarked, put him in mind of an American squib:—

> "Here we stand upon the Constitution, by thunder,
> It's a fact of which there are bushels of proofs;
> For how could we trample upon it, I wonder,
> If it wasn't continually under our hoofs?"

After 1860, he proceeded, the honour of the Government on the question of Reform went to sleep for five years. "Session after session, it never so much as winked. As long as Lord Palmerston lived, honour slept soundly; but, when Lord Palmerston

died, and Lord Russell succeeded by seniority to his place, the sleeping beauty woke up."

Referring to Mr. Gladstone's famous remark as to the working classes being our fellow Christians and our own flesh and blood, he said, there was not a person in the Country who would not profess and call himself Christian. That, therefore, was an argument for the admission of persons of both sexes to the franchise. And, as to the flesh and blood argument, that might be used for constituting a Parliament of beasts.

Criticising, later, the proposed grouping of boroughs under this Measure, Mr. Lowe said that, by grouping several boroughs, and giving them one member in the gross, expenses would be increased, for each constituency would expect from the one general member as much as each of them had received from its individual member. It was like asking a man to marry several wives; nay, worse, it was asking him to marry several widows.

In 1867, referring, in the House of Commons, to Mr. Disraeli's proposal to deal by Resolution with the question of Reform, on the ground that it should no longer seal the fate of Ministries, Mr. Lowe thus expressed himself:—

"Why is it an irresistible reason, because Whigs and Tories have alike failed on this question, that the

right hon. gentleman and his colleagues should enjoy absolute impunity? Why are they to have the mark of Cain set upon them, that nobody may kill them? I should have thought just the contrary; that, where persons had tried on both sides, and failed in an adventure of this kind, it was a very good reason why you should not relax the penalties attendant upon such an attempt. The true principle is, that the Executive Government must be responsible; but, what does the right hon. gentleman propose? With a deal of candid courtesy he beseeches us,—in language which I was ashamed to hear addressed to me as a 658th part of the House, and that he should have thought it necessary to address the House,—he says: 'If the House will deign to take us into its counsel, if it will co-operate with us in this matter, we shall receive with cordiality, with deference,—nay, even with gratitude,—any suggestion it likes to offer. Say what you like to us, only for God's sake, leave us our places.'"

And, in a speech delivered in the same place on Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church Resolutions, in 1868,—the speech which provoked Mr. Disraeli's trenchant rejoinder already quoted,—he said: "The Government, instead of initiating measures, throw out, like the cuttle-fish of which we read in Victor Hugo's novel, all sorts of tentacula for the purpose of catch-

ing up something which it may appropriate and make its own."

Speaking, in 1870, on the Elementary Education Act of that year,—with special reference to the much-debated "Secular" difficulty,—he compared the attitude of the House, agreeing as they did almost unanimously, to the great principle of the measure, but driven to concentrate their attention on one narrow point, to "a fine herd of cattle in a large meadow deserting the grass, which is abundant about them, and delighting themselves by fighting over a bed of nettles in one corner of the field."

His antagonism to Mr. Disraeli has been described. On the question of the Irish Church he alluded, in the House of Commons, to the Conservative Leader as "the great Protestant champion whose experience of mankind has taught him to rely much on their gullibility." And one of the last acts of his political existence, which was abruptly terminated w' .n Mr. Gladstone,—who, in the days of their ancient rivalry, had often given him a vigorous knock-down blow,—at length dealt him, though doubtless not in anger, the "unkindest cut of all" by elevating his old colleague to the House of Lords, in 1880, was,—in his Address to his constituency at the General Election of that year,—thus to assail the famous Dissolution Letter of Lord Beaconsfield, as Mr. Disraeli had then become.

"We are told by the Prime Minister that peace rests on the presence, not to say ('*that is to say*,' interpolated Mr. Lowe,—implying a sneer at the so-called Imperialism of Lord Beaconsfield) the ascendency of England in the Counsels of Europe." And he wound up his Address by observing that he had left untouched much in the Manifesto that might have been commented on, including the cruel manner in which the Prime Minister had "tortured what is, after all, his native language." (This remark was in reference to the rather unusual phrases which the Manifesto contained, such as "consolidate the co-operation;" "men of light and leading," etc.)

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Bernal Osborne.

ONE of the greatest Parliamentary wags of recent times was the late Mr. Bernal Osborne. He represented, for many years, the little borough of Liskeard, which has been rather fortunate in returning distinguished members to the House of Commons, and is at present represented by the very able chairman of Committees, Mr. Courtney.

Mr. Osborne was an Irishman, and possessed more than his fair share of the wit and humour for which his countrymen are so famed. Speaking, in the House of Commons, in 1864, on the Dano-German question, he complained of the fruit of our so-called spirited foreign policy, and thus incidentally referred to the constitution of the Palmerston Administration :—

"Let us see how this Ministry is constituted. There is the noble lord the First Minister. I wish to speak of him with every respect, because a more active and able man in the performance of his duty

has seldom existed in this House. I may say of him, that—

'Panting Time toils after him in vain.'

He is certainly *facile princeps*, and is the liveliest, if not the youngest, man on the Treasury Bench. He deserves credit for his admirable management of affairs during a long course of years. He has acted with all sorts of men, and agreed with all sorts of opinions. Why, Sir, he has contrived a most extraordinary feat—he has conciliated both the Low Church and the high Tory party. The *Record* acknowledges his inspiration, and the hon. member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Newdegate) bows to his influence. These are great feats. But what is his policy? In his domestic policy, he is paternal but stationary. His foreign policy up to this day has been pugnacious and progressive. But now he is about to achieve the most wonderful feat of his life, for he is about to go to the Country as the apostle and minister of peace, and will be supported by the member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright). That is the most extraordinary feat of the whole. I do not think I have been unfair to the noble lord. Well, coming to the Cabinet, it is a museum of curiosities. There are some birds of rare and noble plumage, both alive and stuffed. But, Sir, unfortunately there

is a difficulty in keeping up the breed of these Whig birds. They are a very barren breed, and it was found necessary to cross it with the famous Peelites. I will do them the justice to say that they have a very great and able minister amongst them in the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone); and it is to his measures alone that they owe the little popularity, and the little support they get from this Liberal Party. But it cannot be said by their enemies or friends that they have been prolific in measures, since they have been in office. Then, there is my right hon. friend, who is not connected with the Whigs by family (Mr. Milner Gibson). He is like some 'fly in amber,' and the wonder is, 'how the devil he got there.' The hon. member for Rochdale (Mr. Cobden), and the hon. member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright) must have been disappointed, I think, in this 'young man from the country.' When he married into the family, we expected some Liberal measures from him; but the right hon. gentleman has become insolent and almost quarrelsome under the guidance of the noble lord. Well, what are we to expect? We know, by the traditions of the great Whig Party, that they will cling to the vessel, if not like shipwrecked sailors, at least like those testaceous marine fish which adhere to the bottom, thereby clogging the engines and impeding the progress. Should

a vote of this House displace the Administration, what are the Liberal Party to do? If I might advise the Liberal Party, I should say they may be perfectly happy as to the issue of this great duel. They are somewhat in the position of Iago, when he exclaims, 'If Cassio kill Roderigo, or Roderigo kill Cassio, or each do kill the other, every way makes my gain.' Even should this Parliament decide on terminating its own and their existence, they will find some consolation that the funeral oration will be pronounced by the hon. member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Newdegate), and that *some friendly* hand will inscribe on their mausoleum, 'Rest and be thankful.'"

In 1865, Mr. Baines, the Member for Leeds, brought forward, in the House of Commons, his usual Motion for the lowering of the franchise. The Session was the last one of an expiring Parliament, and Mr. Osborne thus spoke on the question:—

"But, Sir, this question of Reform has been treated, not only by the Treasury Bench, but by the House at large, in an insincere spirit. All have pretended to be Reformers when it suited their purpose. While this Parliament was young and able, we coquetted with a measure which we had no intention of passing into law. But now that Parliament is worn out and dying, we, as political invalids, come forward and

seek to be canonized as reforming saints, when we know that we shall repeat the old game over again as elected convalescents, and shall discover that, although the question of Reform is well suited as a cry for the hustings, it is not adapted to the meridian of this House. The conduct of the House on this question of Reform reminds me of those professional mourners at an Irish funeral, who, while they are groaning and bemoaning the dead, have a very keen eye to the good-will of the incoming tenant. We have all a keen eye to the incoming Parliament, and I agree with my hon. friend the member for Leeds that there cannot possibly be a better time for 'waking' the corpse of Reform than the eve of an expiring Parliament, when the Liberal Party are rather hard up for a cry."

Speaking, in the same place, during the following year, on the proposed continued suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act in Ireland, Mr. Osborne said that there was, in the Government, one man (Mr. Disraeli) who understood that Country, and could settle her grievance, if he were not oppressed by the great mass of "Bucolic respectability" which weighed him down.

In 1867, as we have seen, the Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill was before the Country. Some efforts of the Opposition to alter the law of rating in boroughs having collapsed, Mr. Osborne expressed,

in the House of Commons, disappointment at that result.

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer," he said, "at the beginning of the Session, disclaimed the idea that, in bringing forward his Resolutions as a tentative process, he was angling for a policy. Now, I take it that angling for a policy is to some extent a tentative process, though it may be a fair and legitimate Parliamentary practice. But there is a species of fishing which is neither fair, sportsmanlike, nor legitimate. My hon. friend below me (Mr Bright) is, I believe, a salmon-fisher, and knows to what I allude. There is a thing called 'cross fishing,' where a line is used with different coloured baits, and where both sides of the stream are swept. Now, the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) and his colleague the President of the Poor Law Board (Mr. Gathorne Hardy) have lately been employed in this unsportsmanlike transaction. They have been fishing both sides of the Parliamentary river, and we all know with what success they did so the other evening. The President of the Poor Law Board skilfully threw his flies over the head of the hon. member for Lincolnshire (Mr. Chaplin). He threw the dual vote, the two years' residence, and the counterpoises, and declared that this is a Conservative Bill. The declaration secured the hon. member for Lincolnshire.

That solitary fish rose on the occasion and was safely landed. Then there came the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who threw the fly,—though not a real fly,—of household suffrage down below the gangway on this side of the House, and immediately the member for Sheffield (Mr. Roebuck) gorged the bait. Such has been the process which has been going on; and now, forsooth, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given up the use of the rod and has taken to the net, in which he has caught forty-eight Ultra Reformers on this side."

And, speaking later, in the same place, during that year, on the Motion for the third reading of the Measure, he said the real author of the Bill was not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the hon. member for Birmingham. In 1858, the latter brought in a Bill, the principle of which was rating and household suffrage. This principle had been seized by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Disraeli), who played the part of a gipsy in the matter. He had stolen the child, and disfigured it, in order to make it pass for his own.

CHAPTER IX.

Lord Westbury.

RICHARD BETHELL, the late Lord Westbury, was one of the greatest lawyers and Lord Chancellors that this century has seen.

Among the earliest things we can remember reading, after passing the Robinson Crusoe stage of youth, was the following story in connection with him. Bethell's conspicuous ability at the Bar had commended him to Vice Chancellor Sir Lancelot Shadwell, with whom he became a great favourite,—indeed, whose decisions, it was said, the brilliant advocate irresistibly influenced,—*apropos* of which this conundrum became current in legal circles: "Why is Shadwell like King Jeroboam?" Answer: "Because he has set up an *idol* in Bethell."

Bethell was not only a profound lawyer, but a remarkable speaker. Mr. Gladstone has said that, for subtlety of thought and the power of expressing it in clear, forcible, and luminous language, Bethell had but one rival in his age, viz.: Cardinal Newman.

And he was a bitter wit. Indeed, his tongue was

his ruin. For when, in 1865, serious charges were brought against him of "laxity of practice and want of caution" in the administration of his patronage as Lord Chancellor, although most people felt that his culpability was one of carelessness merely, he had made himself so unpopular by the cutting and caustic remarks in which he had been wont to indulge at the expense of others, that many of the greatest admirers of his talents were not anxious to come to his rescue against the hostile action of his foes. He had, what an old author calls a "filed tongue"; but his smoothest phrase, like the polished stone from the sling of David, did terrible execution.

He began life as a Tory; and, when he was expelled from the Conservative Club for his heretical views on Free Trade, and was making his defence before the Committee, he was told by an old fox-hunting squire, at the further end of the room, to "speak up." "I should have thought," said Bethell, in his sweetest, suavest way; that "man-millinery" style of his, as Sir Thomas Wilde (afterwards Lord Truro) called it,—"I should have thought that the hon. gentleman's ears were long enough to catch my articulate utterances, even at that distance."

"He could snub a peer," it has been said of him, "as ferociously as he had snubbed many a com-

moner. In all humility and singleness of purpose, one of his noble friends sought information from the Woolsack as to the effect of the decision in the Colenso case. It would require more time, he was told, than the Chancellor could spend, and perhaps greater effort than he could employ, to render the proceedings of the Privy Council intelligible to the questioner's mind."

In 1864, there was a long discussion in the House of Lords on the action of Convocation with respect to "Essays and Reviews." Lord Houghton inquired if the Government had taken, or would take, the opinion of the law officers of the Crown as to the powers of Convocation to pass a Synodical judgment on books written either by clergymen or laymen.

Bethell, in the course of what has been described as a "blandly-bitter" reply, said: "What is called a Synodical judgment is simply a series of well-lubricated terms; a sentence so oily and so saponaceous that no one would grasp it. Like an eel, it slips through your fingers,—it is simply nothing; and I am glad to tell my noble friend (Lord Houghton) that it is literally no sentence at all."

The phrase "saponaceous" reminds one of Bethell's old antagonist Bishop Samuel Wilberforce. These two distinguished men died on successive days, in

1873, relative to which occurrence "Punch" thus wrote :—

> "They pass together from the bustling scene
> Where, opposites, they played such leading parts,
> Bandying wits so bright and words so keen,
> Masters of divers arms, but equal arts."

Mr. Ayrton.

ANOTHER clever man, whose speech betrayed him, was the late Mr. Ayrton, Chief Commissioner of Works in Mr. Gladstone's first Administration.

His remarks frequently bordered on insolence, but were often as witty as they were sarcastic. They excited laughter from those who were not affected by them, but irritated almost beyond endurance the unfortunate victims of his bad temper, when he gave them,—that with which Judge Jeffreys used vulgarly to threaten the unhappy prisoners who came before him,—"a lick with the rough side of his tongue."

On one occasion, Lord Elcho, now Earl of Wemyss, had delivered himself, in a fluent and confident style, of some criticisms, in the House of Commons, on certain National matters of Art, which came under the official control of Mr. Ayrton as Chief Commissioner of Works.

Mr. Ayrton wished to depreciate the value of Lord

Elcho's observations, and did so (we quote from memory) somewhat in this manner :—

"Now I don't pride myself (like some amateurs) on possessing much acquaintance with Art. Indeed, I cannot give the House a better idea of my ignorance on the subject than by saying that I don't know much more about it than the noble lord himself."

Lord Wemyss.

SPEAKING of the present Lord Wemyss, *that*, by the way, was a very good reply of his, in the House of Commons, to Mr. Bright's celebrated Cave of Adullam reference. Lord Elcho (as he then was) said : "I assure the Government that the band" (of which he was one) "congregated there is daily and hourly increasing, and will aid in delivering the House from the tyranny and oppression of Saul (Mr. Gladstone) and his armour-bearer (Mr. Bright)."

Duke of Argyll.

WE mentioned the Duke of Argyll's attacks on the late Earl of Derby.

We are not aware that the Duke, accomplished and many-sided as he is, is remarkable for wit and

humour, although, as a matter of fact, Scotchmen are by no means deficient in those qualities, the proverbial "surgical" joke to the contrary notwithstanding. Readers of Dean Ramsay's "Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character" want no further evidence of this truth than that delightful book affords. But, at any rate, the Duke's well-known scientific studies enabled him, once, to make an excellent and amusing comparison.

It was in 1881, on the occasion of a debate in the House of Lords on the Irish Land Bill of Mr. Gladstone's second Administration,—from which Ministry the Duke had severed himself on that very question. Speaking of his former colleagues, he compared them to "a row of jelly fishes, beautiful creatures with a very delicate nervous system, but destitute of a skeleton and a backbone, making most beautiful convulsive movements in the water, and seeming to move in it, when in reality they are only floating with currents and the tide."

CHAPTER X.

Lord Salisbury.

A BRILLIANT and often witty speaker is the Marquis of Salisbury.

We know what a distinguished critic once said he was a master of; and, though increasing years, and the attainment of his present commanding position, have combined to moderate the pungency of his earlier style, when he was Lord Robert Cecil and afterwards Viscount Cranborne, yet, even now, an occasional clever "flout" or "gibe" may be found in his speeches; as, for instance, when, on a quite recent occasion, he spoke of the "tragic nudity" of Mr. O'Brien.

At Watford, in 1883, replying to the toast of the House of Lords, he contested the idea which, he said, the Liberals were always insisting on, that that Assembly should merely register the decrees of the Commons. "I do not think," he said, "it requires a body of their numbers and ability to perform the office of saying 'Amen.' That office is performed usually, to the entire satisfaction of all who hear

him, by a moderately remunerated clerk. I believe that the clerk deserves the full benefit of the position, and never meets with any resistance on the part of the clergyman."

But such a position he could never accept for the House of Lords. And, the following year, at Glasgow, Lord Salisbury alluded to the same subject.

"If it (the House of Lords) is never to contradict the First Chamber, it had better not exist at all. You know that, sometimes, people put two locks upon their safe, and give separate keys to separate people. If they had the same keys, and gave them to the same people, you would think they were very absurd persons.

"But that would be exactly the absurdity of having two Legislative Assemblies which were bound to follow exactly the prescriptions of the Minister of the day. The one would be no check upon the other. It would be like having a Court of Appeal, of which the first rule should be, that it must never reverse a decision of a Court of First Instance. What use would such a Court of Appeal be? I have been taken to task for calling the House of Lords a flywheel. I will go back to an historical simile. I will take the Duke of Wellington's simile. He said it was a way-chain, or, as in these days we should say, a vacuum-brake. Suppose you set up

a brake, of which the first condition should be that it never stopped the wheels going round, what would you think of the wisdom of the persons who set up that brake? That is exactly the wisdom of those who maintain that the duty of the House of Lords is in all things to submit and say heartily 'amen' to the decisions of the House of Commons."

In the Watford speech, from which we have already quoted, he thus referred to the alleged dissensions in the Gladstone Cabinet:—

"Lord Hartington has been giving us other contributions to our political instruction. There is a very ingenious instrument secured by bee-keepers, by which you are able to look through pieces of glass, and see how the bees do their work inside. Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain have been putting the Cabinet under a glass hive, and have enabled us to see how the discussions are conducted. We have long noted the curious phenomena, that Mr. Chamberlain always has his way, and that Lord Hartington, in spite of the perfect plethora of wisdom with which he enters into the Cabinet, always in the end submits. But we have never, until now, seen the bold and high-falutin language with which Mr. Chamberlain treats his colleague, or the 'bated breath and whispering humbleness' with which Lord Hartington responds. I confess I have watched this

exhibition with feelings of considerable regret, because I know that there is a great wrestling match coming off in January, between these two political athletes, on the subject of Reform. My wishes are for Lord Hartington; but, if I were a betting man, my betting would always be on Mr. Chamberlain."

And, in 1884, at Kelso, he thus again commented on the rivalry then supposed to be existing between those two statesmen. "Lord Hartington's relations to the Government seem to me to resemble very much what we have seen of an Italian sermon. I do not know whether you know the mode in which an Italian sermon is conducted. A student is put up at one end of the church, and he maintains the side of the devil, and argues for it as best he can. Of course, he argues very feebly. As soon as he has done, the preacher gets up and demolishes the arguments of the student with great triumph, and sends him away discomfited. That is very much the way the Government appear to deal with their opponents.

"They first set up Lord Hartington to argue a case which they look upon as utterly hopeless; which he does in mild and gentle language, in a very despondent and somewhat sleepy manner; and, when he has done, down comes the fierce denunciation of Mr. Chamberlain, in order, by over-

throwing him, to show how utterly the Ministers trample upon the view which he favours."

In the same speech, at Kelso, he thus referred to Sir William Harcourt.

"Then he (Sir William) goes on to say I am exactly like Laud, that I am exactly like Lord Strafford, that I am very like Charles I., and, some time ago, he said I was exactly like Lord North; so that I must congratulate myself on the possession of a very many-sided character, when I think that I am like all those celebrated persons. But I would venture to remind him that Strafford, when he was in Ireland, had a great weakness for taking away the property of Irish landlords, and I do not know whether that is not rather more like the character of the Government which is in office, than it is like me. I also remember that, the other day, when the Government wanted to lock up somebody or other in Ireland, and they could find no statute in English legislation that would enable them to do it, they were obliged to have recourse to some very despotic statute that was passed by the Earl of Strafford.

"However, Sir William Harcourt is quite safe from retaliation. I shall not compare him to any eminent statesman in the past. I shall not attribute to him overwhelming influence over any assembly, or any man whatever. I fancy that, if we spoke in

the language of the times to which he refers, we should call him a roystering blade, the sort of man whose threats were very formidable, but whose performances were not likely to give anybody very much trouble."

At Dumfries, in 1884, alluding to the Gladstone County Franchise and Redistribution Bills, and to the statements of the Government that both Measures could not be passed together, but that the former must be carried first, in order to put Parliament under "compulsion," he said: "I need not tell you that this is an entirely new pretension in our constitutional history. Never before has a Minister of the Crown assumed to have the right to exercise compulsion upon the free decision of the two Houses of Parliament;" and then he thus proceeded:—

"Those who have domestic experience may know that the way of making a baby take medicine is to pinch its nose, and to insert a drenching-spoon into its mouth, and, in that way, the baby is made to take the medicine to which it would otherwise object. That is precisely the process Her Majesty's Government propose to apply to the House of Commons. They propose, by means of this Parliamentary drenching-spoon, to force down the throats of the House of Commons the medicine which they know

very well, if the House of Commons had the opportunity of unbiassed judgment, it would decline to accept."

Speaking in the Victoria Hall, London, in 1885, he thus commented on a remark by Lord Hartington that he (Lord Hartington) was afraid he and his friends could not well form a Party by themselves.

"Well," said Lord Salisbury, "I suppose his friends are Lord Derby and Mr. Goschen. I am sure that that would be one of the most remarkable Parties which English history has yet presented. There was, at the beginning of this century, a Ministry known as 'the Ministry of all the Talents,' and this would be 'a Ministry of all the Irresolutions.' Can you fancy their inner councils,—the Egyptian skeleton and Rip Van Winkle trying to make up each other's minds, and Lord Derby steadily pouring cold water upon both?"

Mr. Gladstone,—Lord Salisbury once said,—"has navigated every zone of political opinion." Of the alliance existing between Whigs and Radicals, he remarked at another time: "They" (the Whigs) "give to the federated Party,—I will not call it a united Party,—a certain air of respectability. They have been compared, not inaptly, to those fine names that you sometimes see upon the prospectus of a

doubtful Company, which represent, not the real working men or governing spirits, but only those who commend it to the ignorant public outside. I am afraid that the predatory Radical, who is the dominant animal in the Liberal menagerie, owes it entirely to the Whigs if he is able to provide some fragments of sheep's clothing to hide the familiar lineaments of his species."

And, of the doctrines of a then famous Radical Leader in particular (Mr. Chamberlain), he said: "They are the unique possession of this Country, and would not be tolerated by any other Country on the surface of the Globe."

CHAPTER XI.

Lord Granville.

EARL GRANVILLE is as much distinguished for the humour, as for the unfailing courtesy of his genial speeches. That was a very amusing description which he gave in the House of Lords, in 1855, of the ramifications of his family ties. "My lords," he said, "I had better make a clean breast of it at once; and I am obliged to admit that some of those who went before me had such quivers full of daughters who did not die old maids, that I have relations on this side of the House, relations upon the cross-benches, relations upon the opposite side of the House; and I actually had the unparalleled misfortune to have had no fewer than three in the Protectionist Administration of my noble friend opposite."

Defending himself, in 1885, in the same place, from the charge of vacillation as Foreign Secretary, he sought to show that his policy was adapted to the changing circumstances of the case, "being just as vacillating as the conduct of a man who puts

up his umbrella when it rains, takes it down when it is fine, and unfolds it again when the rain recommences."

Lord Rosebery.

TALKING of umbrellas, that familiar phrase, "the Gladstone umbrella," was coined by that smart, festive, but, like Earl Granville, always urbane speaker, the Earl of Rosebery. In 1885, at the Annual Meeting of the Midlothian Liberal Association at Edinburgh, he contended that Mr. Gladstone was the only possible Leader of the Liberal Party. He said: "As for Lord Hartington, he is a Whig; Mr. Chamberlain is a Radical; and I, gentlemen, am satisfied to be a Liberal; yet we are all content to stand under Mr. Gladstone's umbrella."

And, in 1888, he said of Mr. Goschen: "With a slight infusion of Liberalism, that gentleman would make a good Conservative."

Sir William Harcourt.

A WITTY and humorous orator, whose style, indeed, sometimes borders on the burlesque, is Sir William Harcourt. We happened to hear him make his

maiden speech in the House of Commons. An eloquent and impressive speech it was, and well received by members, on both sides of the House, who were interested in the first appearance among them of the well-known "Historicus." That was more than twenty years ago, before he had cultivated so assiduously those diverting low comedy methods in which he is now so great an adept. Still, he was always inclined to jocularity. Thus, in 1870, speaking in the House of Commons, on the Elementary Education Act of that year, he described municipal elections; and asked what they would be, with "the element of religious animosity superadded?" "I suppose," he said, "that there will be 'religious' public-houses in every street; that blue and yellow placards will invite the voters to support 'Jones, and the Thirty-nine Articles,' or 'Smith, and No Creed,' or, 'Robinson, and Down with the Bishops;' and cabs will be flying about advertising the theological merits of the different denominations; and rival divines will take the chair nightly at meetings in public-houses and beer-taps. There will be a great deal of religious discussion, and a good deal more of religious beer. Towards the afternoon of the polling-day, there will be miraculous conversions of all kinds; next morning, many people will find out that, in the course of twenty-four

hours, they have held every known form of religious faith; while, close upon four o'clock on the polling-day, men will accept as many articles of faith as you may supply them with pints of beer, and the least sober will be the most orthodox."

Latterly, Sir William's wit has been chiefly exercised at the expense of the Liberal Unionists, over whom he is continually making merry. Here are some of his numerous jocose allusions,—selected from speeches delivered at various times and places, which need not be particularised,—to those ex-colleagues and friends.

"These are strong men, but you may now bind them with withes. They have experienced the fate of Samson since they have taken to toying with the Delilah of Toryism. Their locks are shorn. Their strength is gone from them, and they have no longer the power to influence the mind and the convictions of the Nation. You may have observed that a cross between different species is generally sterile, and all we get out of these unnatural conjunctions is a political mule."

Again: "They have left one Party and they have not joined another, and they are not numerous enough to make one of their own, and they are very proud of being a sort of virtuous spirits unattached. They remind me always of the melancholy

group that Dante encountered in the vestibule of Hades. He describes them as men who stood by themselves alone, men who were neither faithful nor faithless, that heaven would not receive them, and the other place declined their company. They were too bad for mercy, and Justice would not judge them, and the great poet Virgil advised Dante to glance at them and pass on. Let us just glance at them and pass on."

Again: "They are the Party of secession. They secede from everybody and from everything; they seceded from the Liberal Federation, and the Federation became twice as numerous and as powerful as it was before; they seceded from the Eighty Club, and the Eighty Club is more numerous than ever; they seceded from the National Liberal Club, and we know what effect their secession has had upon the club. It was a saying of the old philosophers that 'nature abhors a vacuum,' and the vacuum created by the secession of the Liberal Unionists is a vacuum which Nature very soon fills up."

Again: "Gentlemen, I have read that in old days the Dutch traders found great difficulty in getting into profitable intercourse with the heathen markets in China, and the sole conditions on which they were admitted to profitable intercourse were that

they should blaspheme and trample upon the emblems of their faith. Now, that seems to be the condition on which the Unionists are allowed to ally themselves to the Tories. They were called upon to abjure the name of Radicals. They have begun in that way, and I think they are likely to go on in that direction. They have abjured the name, and they have given up the thing; and it is upon these terms alone that they were admitted to the alliance."

And yet again: "I know something of what the Liberal Unionists are in my own constituency. They are no doubt an interesting organization, like many of those you have seen under the microscope, but it requires rather a high power to detect them in the low form of organization to which they belong."

There was an incident that occurred in the House of Commons, a short time ago, which strikingly displayed Sir William's adroitness in debate. On that occasion, he succeeded in employing, and yet keeping strictly within the rules of the House, a call to order by the Chairman of Committees as a powerful argument in support of the very assertion which the Chairman had ruled unparliamentary. Sir William was alluding to some statements by Mr. Balfour as having been "brought forward to mislead the House and deceive the people."

Mr. Courtney here interposed, and said: "That is not a Parliamentary expression." Whereupon Sir William thus proceeded: "I will not characterise the conduct of the Chief Secretary, because the Chairman has reminded me that it is difficult to do so in Parliamentary language."

CHAPTER XII.

Lord Randolph Churchill.

IT is interesting to reflect for how long a time Lord Randolph Churchill,—whose political importance is now very generally recognised,—was treated with mere good-natured indulgence as a kind of mischievous boy,—a sort of Parliamentary Puck! Even his bodily presence was usually represented in the comic journals as small and insignificant, whereas he is really a tallish man. He eventually showed, however, that there was not much of the Lilliputian about him, except his undoubted talent (metaphorically speaking) for lacerating with darts some political Gulliver, of which talent the following racy and telling passages furnish examples. Speaking at Blackpool, in 1884, on the lavish expenditure by the Government, whichever Party was in power, he said :—

"The only difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives on this most vital question is that Conservative extravagance is honest and above board; Liberal extravagance is dishonest and surreptitious. Sir Stafford Northcote and Mr. Gladstone contending

about financial extravagance, always reminds me of the two men who went up into the Temple to pray, Sir Stafford Northcote occupying the pleasing and hopeful position of the Publican, Mr. Gladstone that of the purblind and sanctimonious Pharisee."

And, in the same speech, he drew a most comical picture,—a caricature some persons would call it,—of the home life and public achievements of the latter of those two distinguished men.

"'Vanity of vanities,' says the preacher, 'all is vanity.' 'Humbug of humbugs,' says the Radical, 'all is humbug.' Gentlemen, we live in an age of advertisement, the age of Holloway's pills, of Colman's mustard, and of Horniman's pure tea; and the policy of lavish advertisement has been so successful in commerce that the Liberal Party, with its usual enterprise, has adapted it to politics. The Prime Minister is the greatest living master of the art of personal political advertisement. Holloway, Colman, and Horniman are nothing compared with him. . .

"However, these remarks of mine are merely preliminary to a couple of concluding political observations to which I was led by two of the Gladstonian advertisements which appeared in the papers the other day. The first described the journey of a deputation of working-men from the pure and immaculate borough of Chester to Hawarden Castle.

It has always appeared to me somewhat incongruous and inappropriate that the great Chief of the Radical Party should reside in a Castle. But, to proceed. One would have thought that the deputation would have been received in the house, in the study, in the drawing-room, or even in the dining-room. Not at all. That would have been out of harmony with the advertisement 'boom.' Another scene had been arranged. The working-men were guided through the ornamental grounds, into the wide-spreading park, strewn with the wreckage and the ruins of the Prime Minister's sport. All around them lay the rotting trunks of once umbrageous trees; all around them, tossed by the winds, were boughs and bark and withered shoots. They came suddenly on the Prime Minister and Master Herbert, in scanty attire and profuse perspiration, engaged in the destruction of a gigantic oak, just giving its last dying groan. They are permitted to gaze and to worship and adore, and, having conducted themselves with exemplary propriety, are each of them presented with a few chips as a memorial of that memorable scene. Is not this, I thought to myself as I read the narrative, a perfect type and emblem of Mr. Gladstone's government of the Empire? The working classes of this Country, in 1880, sought Mr. Gladstone. He told them that he would give them and all other subjects of the

Queen much legislation, great prosperity, and universal peace, and he has given them nothing but chips. Chips to the faithful allies in Afghanistan, chips to the trusting native races of South Africa, chips to the Egyptian fellah, chips to the British farmer, chips to the manufacturer and the artisan, chips to the agricultural labourer, chips to the House of Commons itself."

In 1885, at Paddington, Lord Randolph thus spoke on a subject which was then greatly agitating the public mind :—

"The struggle between England and Russia at the present moment is rather analagous to a celebrated struggle which took place some years ago, and which I can just remember, between two individuals in this Country—the great fight between Heenan and Sayers. On the one hand, you have a great overgrown Power, a very flabby all-over-the-place Power, presenting many parts in which can be dealt a vital blow, but at the same time able, if it once gets a good fling at you, to give you a most tremendous blow. On the other hand, you have a champion, like England, more collected, muscular, self-contained, inexhaustible in pluck and resources; and this struggle is going on, and, for your ring, all around outside the ropes, you have the countless populations of Asia; but I greatly fear,—as we have had so very much the worst of the first

three or four rounds,—I greatly fear that our champion has been nobbled, and I do not know whether it may not be too late even now to try and provide him with more faithful, more watchful, and more experienced backers."

Lord Randolph's power of witty phrase-making is thus shown. "An evil and moon-struck Minister," he once called Mr. Gladstone; and, on another occasion, he spoke of that right hon. gentleman's "peculiar hair-splitting and casuistical faculties." Mr. John Morley, resisting, in 1884, the desire of the Conservatives for an appeal to the people, on the question of the House of Lords and Mr. Gladstone's County Franchise Bill,—he likened to "Felix, the Roman Governor, when being preached to about the judgment to come," exclaiming, "Yes! perhaps, very likely! but at a more convenient season."

And Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden he once described, with reference to Free Trade, as "two plundering cuckoos, who shamefully ejected Mr. Charles Villiers from the nest which he had constructed, and who reared therein their own chattering and silly brood."

Mr. Balfour.

ANOTHER member of the "Fourth Party" who has now attained to celebrity is Mr. Balfour. A sprightly

and often entertaining speaker he is,—entertaining at least to those who are mere spectators of his oratorical performances. Often, however, his vigorous thrusts, which are *fun* to them, mean *death* to the reputations of others. Thus: referring to Mr. Gladstone's Bingley Hall speech, in 1888 (already quoted), he said:—

"Never once, during that speech, did Mr. Gladstone deviate into accuracy."

Mr. Balfour is a literary man, and, probably, had in his mind, consciously or unconsciously, when he uttered this criticism, Dryden's lines on MacFlecknoe:

> "The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
> But Shadwell never deviates into sense."

Somewhat to the same purport was Mr. Balfour's comment on the Liberal Leader, a short time ago. Mr. Gladstone had delivered a speech, in the House of Commons, on a motion by Dr. Cameron relative to Home Rule for Scotland. The Irish Secretary, in following him, said: "The right hon. the member for Midlothian is always bringing bad history to the rescue of bad politics."

Lord Selborne.

AN equally neat remark, by the way, but one more suffused with the "milk of human kindness," was

that which the Earl of Selborne lately made at Birmingham, respecting his old friend and political Chief:—

"Although Mr. Gladstone does utter most extraordinary things, yet, from my own knowledge of him, I am convinced that, if he ever says anything calculated to deceive anybody else, he has first succeeded in deceiving himself."

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Shaw Lefevre.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Chamberlain, in spite of his unquestionable abilities, may not be,—at least in his public utterances,—a witty man, he is, at any rate, like Falstaff, the cause of wit in other men.

Here's an instance, which occurred during the Gladstone Administration of 1880–5. The Conservatives had made, in the House of Commons, some attacks on Mr. Chamberlain, who was then their pet aversion. Said Mr. Shaw Lefevre, in defence of his colleague: "The President of the Board of Trade seems to occupy the proud and amiable position of lightning conductor to the Government, for he attracts to himself and diverts from his colleagues all the vulgar abuse which is in the air."

Mr. John Morley.

JOHN MORLEY'S fine literary style,—which has had so much to do with his rapid advance as a politician,—

is universally admitted. As a rule, he is solemn, almost sombre, in his oratory; though, now and then, flashes of genuine, if quiet, humour light up his speeches.

Of a distinguished secessionist from the Liberal Party, in 1887, he said: "But I will confess that I am not conscious of any great refrigeration of the temperature of Liberalism, in consequence of the withdrawal of the Solar heat of Mr. Goschen."

And again, in another speech that year, he described the same right hon. gentleman "with all the starch taken out of his heroics."

And yet again, this year, he said: "In November last, the Chancellor of the Exchequer went into Scotland. He swept through it with waving plumes, with brandished sword, and loud martial shouts, like Napoleon Buonaparte crossing the Alps at Sanger's Circus."

Mr. Morley's "mended or ended" phrase,—applied to the House of Lords,—is well remembered.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

THE waggishness of Sir Wilfrid Lawson is proverbial. The Temperance Party are, indeed, fortunate in having as their leading political representative so genial and jocose a man as the hon. baronet. For he

never rises to make a speech without being a *standing* example of the truth that wine is not essential to wit,—that teetotalism is not, necessarily, dulness; though, doubtless, a disbeliever in total abstinence might be wicked enough to say that Sir Wilfrid's pleasantry chiefly proves that, if he can be humorous as a teetotaler, how much more so would he be were he to "take a little wine for his 'wit's' sake,"—assuming the truth of the poet Crabbe's dictum :—

> "Wine is to wit as water thrown on fire,
> By duly sprinkling, both are raised the higher."

In a discussion in the House of Commons, in 1888, on Mr. Stevenson's Sunday Closing Bill, Sir Wilfrid remarked of a brother legislator, who was well known not to be a blue-ribbonite, that he had no doubt that hon. member was about to make a speech "on this question of drink, for I see him sitting there, *evidently full of his subject.*"

And the hon. baronet tells a story remarkably well. The following is one of his latest :—

"Did you never hear of the student at college? He was sent for by the Don, who said: 'Sir, I am told that you have a barrel of beer in your room, which is contrary to all orders.' And the young man said: 'Well, sir, that is true; but the fact is the doctors told me that if I drank this beer I should get stronger.' The Don said: 'Are you stronger?'

'Yes, sir, indeed I am,' was the reply; 'for when the barrel came in I could scarcely move it, and now I can roll it round the room.'"

Mixed Metaphors.

THE *unconscious* humour of some of our Hibernian politicians is often vastly entertaining. Everybody remembers the famous Sir Boyle Roche and his mixed metaphors:—

"Mr. Speaker! I smell a rat; I see it floating in the air, but I will yet nip it in the bud."

And, even now, some modern Obadiah Bull occasionally convulses the House of Commons by a similarly ludicrous remark; as when, not long ago, Mr. W. Redmond denounced a certain Irish Board as being "steeped to the knees in pig-headedness."

Mr. T. M. Healy.

SPEAKING of Irish members, that was a clever remark of Mr. Tim Healy, a short time ago. The hon. and learned member had been assailing the statements of another Irish member (a Unionist) whom he designated too sarcastically the gallant and

"*very truthful*" member. Whereupon the Speaker interfered, and called upon him to withdraw.

"Mr. Speaker!" said Mr. Healy, "I withdraw the words '*very truthful;*'" thus (somewhat in the mode of Sir William Harcourt, on an occasion already referred to, and yet with an originality of Mr. Healy's own), in the act of literal obedience to the Speaker's authority, forcibly conveying the very condemnation he had previously only ironically implied.

An Amusing Discussion.

AN amusing discussion,—and with this incident we must bring our present task to a close,—took place in the House of Commons this year. The House was in Committee of Supply, and an adjourned debate was resumed on a vote of £36,000 odd for the Parliament Buildings. The inevitable "Ladies' grating" came under discussion. Previously, when this famous obstruction had been debated, it had usually been asserted that its retention was desirable in the interest of the *members*. An uninterrupted view of the fair occupants of the ladies' gallery would, it had been commonly said, unnerve, and render incapable of properly discharging their legislative duties, our impressionable Parliamentary repre-

sentatives. But, on this occasion, a member (Mr. Labouchere) asserted that the retention of the grating was desirable in the interest of the *ladies*. He did not think that members were so particularly ornamental that the ladies should desire further facilities for beholding them.

The ventilating arrangements of the House were also discussed. Sir W. Foster said that the unnatural dryness of the air of the Lower Legislative Chamber rendered frequent recourse to beverages necessary; and that members were becoming more and more bleached by exposure to such an atmosphere. Dr. Fitzgerald added that the air sent into the House was obtained from the cellars, and that nothing good came from a cellar except wine. The remote consequence of sitting in such a chamber was that, after a year or two, the hair fell off. Members, he complained, were being "scientifically poisoned."

Said Sir George Campbell,—endorsing this view,—what they wanted was "more of God's air and less of Dr. Percy's."

Whereupon, Mr. Labouchere retorted upon all these pessimists together. Again, that evening,—and probably for only the second time in his life,—the witty senior member for Northampton,—to whom we wish we could have devoted more space,—was in a Conservative and contented mood. He thought

the ventilation of the House absolutely perfect. As for losing their hair, *that*, he held, was a mere trifle; they could surely make *that* sacrifice for their Country.

Doubtless, this latter very proper sentiment was not without its due effect on those to whom it was addressed, and that, in concluding our little book, we may justly parody a famous old couplet and say,—which we do with pleasure,—of our self-denying legislators :—

> "True patriots all! for, be it understood,
> Their locks they forfeit for their Country's good."

THE END.

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